DOCUMENTARY film news

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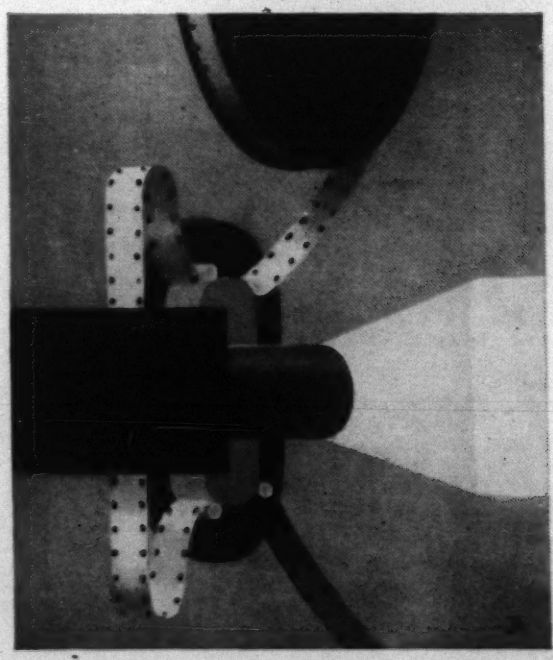

Cinema

CREDIT for the actual invention of the cinematograph is difficult to apportion. It is certain that Englishmen played an important part. As long ago as 1860 Sir John Herschel published a theory of cinematography, and about 1889 a patent for a cinema camera and projector was applied for by W. Friese Greene and M. Evans. Today the cinema is our great relaxation. But how many of us who go to " the movies ", who watch the latest performance of our particular " star ", realise what the cinematograph industry owes to the workers in many branches of science and technology, and not least to the chemist? No other form of entertainment owes him so heavy a debt. Celluloid itself, the basis of the industry, is a chemical achievement. This must be transparent to give clear images after great magnification, resilient and tough to stand great strain. It must be so treated that the danger from fire is reduced to a minimum. The hand of the chemist is indeed traceable from the make-up of the actors to the lamps in the projectors. In the apparatus used for the sound-recording rare metals are needed: in the lenses of cameras and projectors, optical glass of the highest quality: in the colour-photography, pigments of the truest and most vivid colour. The sets for the ballrooms and palaces of the cinema's Cloudcuckoodom involve the use of large quantities of paints, quick-drying stucco and plasters: the costumes and draperies must be dyed. The tale is continued into the cinema theatre itself, in its decoration, its disinfection, its air-conditioning. When next you sit in your favourite cinema, think for a moment of the patient work in laboratory and factory that has enabled you to see the wonders of the world or the finest product of the cinematograph studio so clearly and still at so modest a price.

ICI

DOCUMENTARY *film news*

VOL. 7 NO. 64 APRIL 1948

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WHICH HUNT?

IT MAY BE too much at this stage to hope to find unanimity in the bewildered, muddled, dollarpounded, scatter-brained, boom-slumped and junglebooked collection of human oddities which make up the film trade. But anyone who has kept an eye on the far-too-successful idiocies of the Committee on un-American activities might well feel that now, and not later, is the time for the British film industry to think very carefully about the implications of the current purge of Communists instituted by the Labour Government. *DFN* does not play party politics, and we are quite prepared to believe or disbelieve, in the danger of having party members within certain areas of the Civil Service; but there is, on any and every count, something nasty about the secrecy, the lack of public judgment and right of appeal, which enshrouds the measures announced by Mr Attlee. Both on general grounds of the wellbeing of the State, and because there are not a few film-workers who are in the direct employ of the Government (and there'd be lots more if ACT had its way and nationalized us), all people in the Trade should ponder carefully the long-term implications of the purge. Will it turn into a witch-hunt? And if so, which witch hunt? Against traitors, or against 'progressives'? These questions are of especial importance to all members of the documentary film movement and their 'fellow-travellers' (teachers etc), because the documentary movement has been, and will continue to be closely identified with progressive thought and action, both on the national and the international front. Documentary has never accepted any political labels, and has never identified itself with any political party. This has not prevented it from being accused from time to time of being pillar-box red, or, on the other hand, of being the lackey of big business and monopoly capital. It has survived both accusations because both are false.

But the implications of the present anti-Communist panic—and they are *possible* implications, and no more than that—are somewhat disturbing. It is certainly alarming to read in a *Times* leader (approving the purge) a condemnation of Communism on the grounds that it is 'an international creed, dedicated to a crusade that overrides patriotism'. Shades of Nurse Cavell! Poor Sir John Boyd Orr! Poor Julian Huxley! Miserable Trygve Lie! And thrice, thrice miserable documentary film maker! The *Times* leader continues, 'the faithful and their camp followers cannot fairly expect to be trusted in positions of responsibility by the unbelievers who are in an overwhelming majority and who retain an impenitent, bourgeois preference for putting the country first'. Well now, we can all understand what the poor leader writer was trying to say in this particular context, and without the guiding hand of an editor like Barrington Ward; but that does not alter the fact that a *Times* leader writer should so allow himself to be panicked as to express, in any context whatsoever, so unfortunate a sentiment, a sentiment which, if acted on, would make it wise for most documentary workers to hand themselves over to their old colleague Detective Inspector Cain without more ado.

We do not in fact suggest that the situation is serious—yet. We do not in fact support either the Russian or the American thesis. But we do ask the film industry, and documentary in particular, to be extremely vigilant lest the creative and social urge tend to be engulfed in an undiscriminating political panic. Thus, having ourselves looked under the bed for a moment, we beg others not to do it for too long; too protracted a scrutiny may reveal something very unpleasant; cracked, and without a handle.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The New Films Agreement

TALKS TAKING place between the Board of Trade and leading Hollywood representatives over the future of American films in Britain ended at the beginning of March in a compromise. Briefly, this agreement, covering a period of four years, guarantees Hollywood a minimum annual remittance of 17 million dollars, plus a sum equivalent to the amount earned by British films in America. The money earned by Hollywood films over and above this total, which will probably be some 10-12 million pounds judging from past figures, will remain in this country, and its use will be regulated by a Joint Committee of the British Government and the Motion Picture Association of America. Up to two and a half million pounds may be invested, in the first two years, in approved commercial or industrial undertakings, and a further sum may be used in encouraging the arts, but the greater part of this surplus will be directed into the British film industry itself, for financing the improvement of studios, the purchase of story rights, the production of films, and so on. In return for this agreement the Government has withdrawn the 75 per cent import tax on American films.

Under this agreement the actual dollars which Hollywood will be taking out of this country will be only a little more than was envisaged under the import tax, and there is some incentive to Hollywood to promote the showing of British films in America, since they will be able to take out extra money accordingly. On the other hand, Hollywood will be assured of at least four or five million a year, regardless of the quality of the films they send us, and however the distribution of British films increases in the USA they cannot earn dollars, as Hollywood remittances will merely increase correspondingly. Financially speaking, therefore, the agreement is fairly well-balanced, but the section relating to the investment, mainly in the film industry, of the balance remaining in this country is not so attractive. While Hollywood will not be able to buy up British cinemas, at least not without the permission of the Board of Trade, it will be able to dominate production to an extent not possible in the past. The British film industry stands in urgent need of capital to finance production, but if this capital is to be drawn from American sources, there is a danger that it may mean the production in Britain of a large number of imitation Hollywood-type films, which could only lower the prestige of our technicians; and it may lead, too, to an even worse shortage of facilities available to the independent British producer. On balance, therefore, one can only view the whole agreement with the greatest concern.

The main interests in the British film industry gave the Government no real support in its negotiations with Hollywood, and no effective evidence of the promised increase in production, while the Secretary of the CEA in an article in the *Kinematograph Weekly* after the conclusion of the agreement complacently congratulated himself and his members on their success in getting the tax removed. The situation will not improve unless the industry itself shows a greater willingness in future to assist in stabilizing the national economy.

Hamburg Film Society

THE HAMBURG FILM SOCIETY had its first showing on February 16th. The programme included Helmut Käutner's film *Unter die Brucke*, banned by the Nazis during the war, and *Song of Ceylon*. The Society is under the joint presidency of the Regional Commissioner and the Burgomeister, and is managed by a British and German committee. Membership of the Society is limited to 1,000 persons, of whom not more than 300 may be British. The aims of the Society are as follows:

(i) The display, to a selected public, of feature and documentary films of outstanding artistic or historical merit, and in particular of such films made before 1933 in Germany and abroad, and after 1933 abroad.
(ii) The rapprochement of the film industry and the public.
(iii) The exchange of ideas between members of the German film industry and the British.

Young People's Film Club

IT IS proposed to form a Film Club for London schoolchildren—mainly from secondary and public schools.

The idea is to encourage a critical appreciation and understanding for good films—educational, instructional and entertainment films of all nations.

The shows will in some cases be centred round topics (Life at Sea, Animal Behaviour, Planning of Cities past and present, etc., etc.). Short talks given by experts, will often introduce the films, and discussion will be encouraged. Good music, related to the films, will be played by the children in the interval.

Seven shows are planned at intervals of three to four weeks on Friday evenings. A subscription of 10*s*. is suggested for the season.

Headmasters of all secondary and public schools in the London area have been written to with a view to finding out how they feel about the idea and how many of their staff would wish to co-operate.

Twenty-nine Years

H. BRUCE WOOLFE started life in the film industry 29 years ago when he founded British Instructional Films. Since then he has had more than a thousand films to his credit. On Wednesday, March 17th, he retired from the Chairmanship of the Association of Specialized Film Producers and that body gave a luncheon in his honour. *DFN* would like to add to that tribute in these columns and, on behalf of its readers and its Editorial Board, to congratulate Mr Bruce Woolfe on his long and outstanding service to the film industry. We hope that his name will continue to be connected with the trade for many years to come.

Shorts

THE Minister of Education has appointed the following to be Governors of the Educational Foundation for Visual Aids: Sir Rolande Wall, MC (chairman), Dr W. P. Alexander, Mr J. Beddington, CBE, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards, Sir Henry French, GBE, KOB, Mr W. Griffith, Mr F. A. Hoare, Mr H. D. Hughes, MP, Mr S. H. Marshall, MP. Mr G. G. Williams, CB, deputy secretary to the Ministry of Education, will act as assessor to the Governors.

*

GLASGOW HAS, by a majority of one vote, recommended the finance committee of its Corporation to investigate the question of civic cinemas. It is good to see advantage taken so quickly of the amendment to the Local Government Bill. They hope to concentrate on the cultural aspect of film shows and not to attempt to compete with the usual form of entertainment cinema.

*

THE BFPA is allocating ten Film Fellowships among the studios —nine students will come from European countries and one from China. Shell Petroleum are also giving two. This is in agreement with the UNESCO proposals.

Art and the People

by

Sinclair Road

A NEW DEAL for the arts is slowly taking shape in Britain. Sometimes development seems more by accident than design but the task is a difficult one. One cannot order and arrange the production and supply of paintings or music or even films, as simply as one can provide the manufactured goods which people need. At the same time there are a number of very practical steps that have to be taken. In the first place, the creative worker needs the financial support which will enable him to follow his trade. Second, he needs a direct and productive relationship with the public. The picture of the artist, living on coffee and crumbs in a garret writing or composing for himself alone stuff which no one else reads or hears, and who finally turns out to be a genius after a tubercular death, may be romantic, but it is utterly wrong. It is another symptom of a society which is out of joint. In an age of full employment everyone should be enabled to work, whether their skill is at the lathe, the loom, the easel or the camera. On the other hand, it is no good creating the financial and social conditions in which the artist can work, without ensuring at the same time that the public has easy and ready access to the results of his work. An attentive and responsive public is a key to the whole problem.

During the war years the number of people who went to the theatre and to concerts and who set foot in art galleries for the first time vastly increased. In the case of films too there was the beginning of a far more critical interest in what was being produced. At the end of the war the country was faced with the problem of giving this increased interest a more permanent framework. The Arts Council became an established body to develop music, arts and drama. Government sponsorship of films continued. There is much debate now about the further assistance which the Government must give to the film industry to allow film-making in Britain greater scope and opportunity. But again a practical problem arises. There is a lot that the State can do out of public funds to support the arts; but encouragement from the centre is useless without a genuine local response.

Till now local activity has been inhibited by a number of things. Principally local authorities have not had the statutory power to go into this very important section of local life. There have been a few exceptions. Under the Holidays-at-Home Campaign city councils had the authority to provide concerts and entertainments of all kinds, but only so long as the war lasted. Seaside towns have also been allowed to spend a little money on entertaining their visitors. But by and large there has in the past been no country-wide sanction for civic encouragement of the arts.

Now, the picture has been completely changed by the new Local Government Bill, which empowers local authorities to spend up to 6*d.* of the rates on arranging entertainments of all kinds. They can sponsor their own theatrical companies and orchestras, acquire or even build concert halls, theatres and cinemas. For the first time the power to provide the facilities for people to enjoy the arts is available in Britain.

In part these clauses in the Local Government Bill are an indictment of commercially provided entertainment which has failed in a number of respects to provide what is needed. In part it is a necessary development in the process of making educational and cultural facilities freely available to the public without whose interest and support there can be no real stimulus to the artist. And this is no idle phrase. If one looks back over the past one finds that solid public participation is an almost invariable condition of a period of artistic achievement.

The opportunities which the new Local Government Bill provides are clear. But will they be taken? A new order on the Statute Book particularly when it is one of this kind, depends to a very large extent for its success on the degree of popular response. In other words much of the initiative now rests with all the local voluntary groups in the country, on the institutes, on the drama, music and film and other societies, to see that their local council uses its new powers and uses them wisely. When one compares the present status of the various arts and entertainments, the fact that there are only 200 theatres in the country, even fewer concert halls, as against some 4,700 cinemas, indicates obvious priorities for action. On the other hand, the enormous preponderance of cinema facilities should not blind one to the limitations of the entertainment they provide. In fact, the commercial cinema offers only a very narrow choice of films. The vast majority of the public is not at present able to see films made by other countries apart from America. Nor is it able to see by any means all the films made in this country. The fate of documentary films trying to get the cinema distribution is the obvious example. The rapid post-war growth of the Film Society Movement which now numbers as many as 150 societies is an example of the demand. But film societies have consistently been hampered to their development, by lack of halls, lack of projectors, the cost and difficulty of getting films to show. It is at this point that local councils can help. They should see to it that no local film society is being hamstrung by lack of facilities. They may even go to the length of establishing civic cinemas to ensure a wider choice of film entertainment than is available commercially. They can even promote the production of films.

The pattern of what is needed and can be done is the same for the other arts as well. In all cases, too, it is up to those who have struggled against every kind of difficulty in building up local societies to see that their council gives the help and encouragement that is needed if the arts are to have their proper place in our national life.

A Still from *The British—Are They Artistic?*

Sixpence on the Rates?

In February an amendment was put before the House which may have far-reaching consequences in the world of civic education. Local Authorities, under the amendment to the new Local Government Bill, have been given the right to increase the rates by any amount up to sixpence in order to provide in their areas such facilities for music, drama and films as they may think necessary. 'DFN' has asked for opinions from a wide selection of Local Authorities—many of them are not, as yet, prepared to make any comments. We print all we have received to date and hope to hear from readers on this point which must be of vital importance to anyone living anywhere in these islands.

ALEC SPOOR of the National Association of Local Government Officers sets the ball rolling with these observations—

TO ALL interested in good films, and good documentary in particular, the Local Government Bill now in its final stages in Parliament, is the most heartening thing that has happened since Sir Stephen Tallents gave Grierson and his boys their heads at the Empire Marketing Board in the late 'twenties. For, rightly used, the Bill can open the way to a great renaissance in the making, the showing and the appreciation of film.

One clause empowers borough and district councils to provide theatres and cinemas, to give in them entertainments of any nature, and to subsidize those entertainments to the extent of the product of a sixpenny rate. Another empowers them to make, to join in the making, or to contribute to the cost of films about their work.

Here we have the opportunity, at one blow, to get fine documentaries made, and—what is surely even more important—to get them shown and appreciated.

Already one or two local authorities have made films about their work. Rotha produced *A City Speaks* for Manchester, Jill Craigie *The Way We Live* for Plymouth. Both are fine films—but *A City Speaks* has not been seen outside Manchester and one or two provincial towns, while *The Way We Live* was given a theatrical distribution only after the newspapers had kicked up a fuss over its suppression. Other local government documentaries have been seen only in the village hall—factory circuit of the COI.

Yet local government offers a tremendous and fascinating field for the film-maker. Its fight against squalor and disease; its struggle to replace our blighted slums with worthy homes and communities; its work in succouring the sick, the old, the blind, deaf and crippled; its efforts to bring education, culture and the opportunities of a fuller life to all—all these are the raw material of film, possessing, in the hands of the imaginative director, all the elements of drama, conflict, humour and living humanity. Many councils have wished to make them—but they have been prevented by lack of powers or, where they had the powers, by the reluctance of the commercial exhibitors to show the films they sponsored.

The Bill removes both those obstacles. There is now nothing to prevent a local council, or a group of councils, making films about their work—and getting them shown in their own cinemas.

Eventually, we may hope to have civic cinemas in every town in the country, ready—uninhibited by the prejudices of commercial exhibitors—to show good documentaries of every kind, to screen the best feature films of every country and every period in film history, to run courses in film appreciation, and to give special shows for local groups interested in films of a particular type, catering for the specialist as well as the general audience.

Such civic theatres will not be mammoth 'Super-Colossals' with organ and stage shows. They will be small, friendly, intimate places, with opportunities for meetings and discussions, focal points for local film societies, centres of intelligent local life, capable of developing a new, more critical, yet more appreciative film audience eager for new and more intelligent films.

Here is the opportunity. How far it will be seized depends upon our local councils—which, since it is we who elect them, means us.

LAMBETH is well alive to the use of film in Civic Education—

IN THE past entertainments have been confined to band concerts and performances by concert parties, arranged by the Public Services Committee, in the Council's open spaces.

The Council's Public Relations Committee, formed about 18 months ago, embarked upon a policy of giving public shows of documentary films relating to local government and current affairs. These shows have been arranged in association with the Central Office of Information who have provided the films, projector and operator, the Council undertaking publicity and general administrative details.

Our experience might be summarized as follows:

(*a*) The films are invariably well received. A programme of four or five documentaries does not seem too 'heavy going'. The shows have been particularly popular among old people, some of whom expressed a preference for this type of film over a feature film.

(*b*) An *informal* discussion on the films is usually welcomed after the show, and invariably produces intelligent criticisms and suggestions.

(*c*) Audiences only build up in number slowly. We had audiences of 20-30 at our early shows but these have now increased to 100 or more. Dates, however, should be chosen carefully. We have distributed our shows all over the Borough,—a local 'clash' of dates has a disastrous effect on numbers.

(*d*) It has been found a good plan to offer shows to local organizations, letting them make the necessary arrangements. Such shows are usually open to the public, and may be advertised, but an *interested* nucleus of audience is ensured.

The Council have recently acquired a projector of their own but no detailed decisions have yet been made as to how it will be used.

The main difficulty about the provision of other types of entertainment is the lack of suitable accommodation. The only premises suitable for an orchestral concert, for example, are the local theatre, which is expensive and not large enough. However, the Public Relations Committee are at present considering the possibility of providing one or more such concerts in spite of these difficulties.

The question of the extent to which the Council will use the wider powers allowed under the new Bill has not yet been considered, but again premises are a difficulty.

EALING has been to the fore in local enterprise. They have had special measures passed to enable them to run their own theatre and they lose no opportunity to present culture to their people—

LOCAL GOVERNMENT is losing many of its powers for the practical administration of the local services, and if the spirit of democratic dealing is to be kept alive in the lesser authorities, other likely branches of activity must be explored.

The publicizing of the work of the local Council, the production of local guides and news sheets, the holding of civic exhibitions and the dissemination of information on all local matters has already been undertaken by many authorities, principally with a view to re-awakening the civic consciousness of the citizens or townspeople, not as is commonly supposed simply to justify the rate demand.

Having sufficiently disturbed the prevalent apathy and aroused the enthusiasm for local matters in at least a small percentage of the electors, local Councils must have a prepared plan showing to what end the energy of these townspeople may be turned. I suggest that a determined cultivation of the Arts is sufficiently important to warrant the interest and patronage of any local authority. By that I do not mean merely the opening of an art gallery or museum, or the formation of a municipal orchestra. Most existing art galleries bespeak not cultivation but incarceration of art. A local arts committee must cultivate the talents of those townspeople who might otherwise be 'born to blush unseen'.

In local social and cultural activities are to be found the true riches and fullness of living

Ealing's Theatre

and it is to extend to every citizen the opportunity of discovering this for himself that these activities should be fostered by the local authority. Amateur dramatics are usually tolerated in a kindly fashion because for the most part they are confined to makeshift and inadequate facilities of presentation. Nothing succeeds like success and, given a modicum of support from statutory sources, many amateur dramatic societies would flourish into stable independence. Success begets enthusiasm and enthusiasm is infectious. If the various local cultural societies each received a measure of support from the local council, the resultant success of each would be more participants in, and less spectators of, the passing parade.

If local authorities will adhere to the principle of 'fulfilling a local need' I can foresee no possibility of a clash between them and commercial entertainment, nor any waste of the ratepayers' money.

BATH runs its Festival in May

These questions are posed by the Spa Director of Bath. The answer to them will, we hope, become clear in the next few months. We invite our readers to join in the discussion.

BATH, like certain other resorts, has had special powers for a long time by means of a Private Bill to organize entertainments and publicize attractions. In fact Bath was the first resort in this country to have a regular season orchestra and that was started in the year 1709. The introductions of powers to all local authorities to run their own theatres whilst in its broad aspect, seeming to be of value generally to people of all towns, will bring many problems.

Will municipalities be able to enter into direct competition with private management of theatres in the booking of plays? Will the proposals increase the number of touring theatrical companies and tend to lower the standard?

Will there be a tendency to increase output in the film world and will this lower the standard of film production? What chance of survival will a municipal cinema have in view of intensive competition?

Will it lead to nationalizing of the industry? Could any nationalized art be a success?

People nowadays even in small towns want the best entertainment. Will the powers under this Act give them the best?

LIVERPOOL has a corporation which owns its Philharmonic Hall. They passed a local amendment in 1936—

THE amendment to the Local Government Bill enabling local authorities to organize their own theatres, cinemas, and concerts, is not likely to be of immediate interest to the Liverpool Corporation.

A clause in the local Act of 1936 gave the Council powers which fell short of the new amendment only by the omission of authority to provide cinema entertainment. The use made of these powers would appear to indicate that the city is not dissatisfied with the commercial forms of entertainment available to citizens.

The two principal municipal ventures have been in the fields of music and open-air entertainment, and here the city has offered the public opportunities for enjoying cultural entertainment which could scarcely be practicable on a commercial footing.

The Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, one of Britain's finest concert halls, is owned by the Corporation and its use is granted to the Philharmonic Society and Orchestra under an agreement by which the Society receives an annuity of £4,000 on condition that a specified number of concerts are available at reasonable prices. Last year, the Society received a further £4,000 from the Corporation, largely on account of losses sustained after a full season which included a number of first performances.

The Parks and Gardens Committee have for some years developed an interesting programme of open-air music and drama which has ranged from Punch and Judy shows to Opera. An open-air theatre has been built in Calderstones Park, and last summer amateur societies were invited to provide a season of plays which attracted a large public.

Ownership of the Philharmonic Hall, which is equipped with the most modern sound film apparatus, has enabled the Corporation to assist to some extent in the presentation of documentary and artistic films. The Merseyside Film Institute Society receive preferential terms for the use of the Hall, and their regular showings are usually assured of capacity houses.

ST PANCRAS is one of the most advanced of all the London boroughs. This interesting summary tells of the work they have done and are doing and suggests ways in which they may profit from their new powers—

What has been done in the past *re* films and the arts?

1. For the past twelve years the Education and public Libraries Committee of the Borough Council has carried out 'extension activities' both for adults and children. These are tabulated below:
   (i) *Adult*. Weekly talks throughout the winter, by prominent individuals in various fields. These talks make use of films where they are appropriate, e.g. Frances Pitt and her nature films.
   (ii) Special three-cornered discussions in the Assembly Hall of the Town Hall, e.g. Arnot Robertson, Straus and Hadfield on 'Good and Bad Books'; Stephen Williams, Macqueen-Pope and Val Gielgud on 'The Theatre'.
   (iii) Parents' evening in 'Book Week'.
   (iv) Play-reading groups meeting weekly in two of the Libraries.
   (v) Discussion groups and listening circles are, at present, being organized at other Branches.
   (vi) Summer concerts in the Council's gardens and open-spaces.
   (i) *Children*. 'Book Week' is held each year (see special pamphlet).
   (ii) Talks to children weekly throughout the winter (see pamphlets).
   (iii) Play-reading circles are held weekly at several of our Children's Libraries.
   (iv) Radio Listening Circles are also held.
   (v) The Children's Librarians give regular 'story hours' throughout the year—during the winter, in the Library; during the summer, in the gardens.
   (vi) At 'Children's Corner', our main Children's Library, a very active Puppet Circle has been formed. A group of children are making puppets and clothing them; another group are writing and studying puppet plays, and how to produce them. Eventually, the Circle will present its own plays, using puppets made by its members.
   (vii) An International Correspondence Group is also held at 'Children's Corner'. The children conduct a regular correspondence with other children's libraries all over the world.
2. Pamphlets describing adult and children's lectures are enclosed.
3. In 1946, the Borough Council sponsored the formation of the St Pancras Arts and Civic Council which co-ordinates cultural

(*Continued foot column* 1, *page* 47)

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Rhodesia—Is this your Country? G.B. Instructional for Southern Rhodesia Government. *Written and directed*: Alastair Scobie. *Photography*: James Allen, Frank Goodliffe and Ronald Shears. *Editor*: Oscar Percival. *Distribution*: Non-T. 16 and 35 mm.

Theme. This is a film for emigrants, giving them an idea of the kind of opportunity in Rhodesia awaiting the skilled man or the man with capital.

Comment. If the prospective immigrant notices nothing lacking in the content of this humdrum, superficial survey of a robust country, then it is likely that he is the kind of man for whom Rhodesia is looking. According to the film, Rhodesia offers sunshine, sport, plenty of food (and drink), no irksome chores (there is plenty of native labour to do all these), and a comparatively high standard of living (for the white man) to anyone prepared to work hard and ask no questions.

But the discerning emigrant will spot a number of awkward things: that the enormously greater native population is confined to much less than half the area of the country: that, in spite of attempts in the film to cover it up, a suburban snobbishness emerges only too clearly: and, above all, that pursuits of the mind are wholly ignored—worse still there is no evidence in the film that anyone recognizes their absence.

Creatures of Comfort. Realist for British Gas Council in association with Film Centre. *Producer*: Brian Smith. *Director and camera*: Alex Strasser. *Music and Effects*: Horace Somerville. *Commentary*: David Tree. *Distribution*: B.G.C. non-T. 18 *mins.*

THE thing which strikes one most about a high percentage of the Realist films is the wealth of visual imagination employed. One can usually see what the director has been trying to do and can see, too, that he has spent a great deal of time and thought and enjoyed himself in the process. *Creatures of Comfort* is a good example. It points a sly finger at the notorious discomforts of the English house. The quaintness but impracticality of the plumbing. The draughts that whistle round the back of one's neck while one's legs are being roasted by the fire. The film also gives a clear exposition of the principles which should be respected in heating and ventilating a house. Builders please note! The visual illustrations which are used to bring the story home are vivid and amusing. The commentary, too, has a dry humour. But the laugh in the end was on your reviewer, he went home after seeing the film to find the pipes in his own house well and truly frozen.

Town Rats. Crown for Ministry of Food through COI. *Director*: Geoffrey Innes. *Camera*: William Chaston. *Sound*: Jock May. *Commentary*: Deryck Guyler. *Distribution*: CFL. 20 *mins.*

Theme. The habits of rats and how a local rat-catching department uses its knowledge of these to rid a small area of these pests.

Comment. The modern rat appears to have no musical appreciation; so the problem of ridding a town, or even a small part of a town of its unwelcome and dangerous rat population is far more complex than that which faced the 'de-rodentator' of Hamelin. Today, a local authority approaches its rat menace much as Scotland Yard combats crime—with investigators, catchers and even an information room, complete with map of recent outbreaks. Not unexpectedly, however, the methods of catching the four-footed criminals are very different, and it is doubtful if some of the scenes in this film would find their parallel in a film of our police force.

The film is commendably clear and free from any pretence of being other than a straightforward account of a local problem and its local solution. That it chooses to localize its story is, perhaps, a disadvantage because it makes the rout of routs seem, if not easy, at least practicable; which from all reports is neither the case regionally nor nationally. This aspect aside, *Town Rat* should encourage people to use the organization at their disposal and so help to keep within bounds a far greater menace than most people imagine.

Much patience must have gone into the making of this film. The unit is to be congratulated on having got such lifelike (and deathlike) performances from the main characters.

Your Children's Sleep. Realist for Ministry of Health through COI in association with Film Centre. *Written and produced*: Brian Smith. *Directed*: Jane Massy. *Music*: William Alwyn: *Camera*: A. E. Jeakins.

Theme. Why children can't sleep if they don't, and what they do with it if they can.

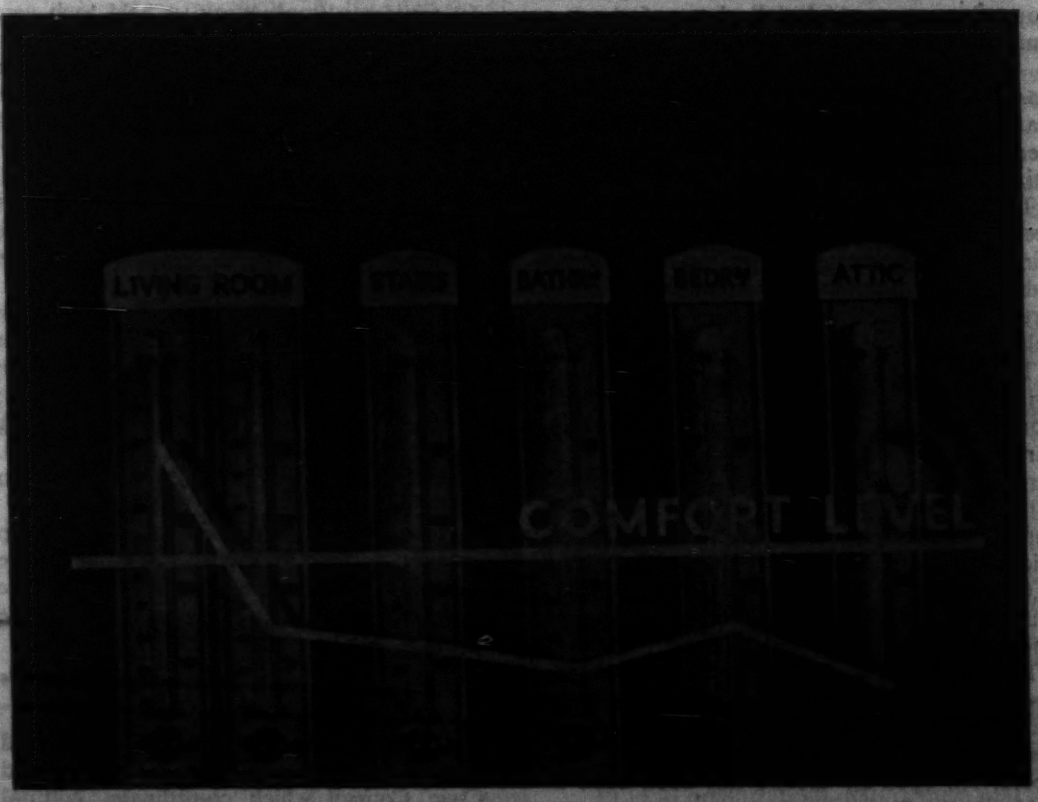
Comment. There are all too many films these days which it is impossible to see without yawning, but the one film that might be expected to have a yawn in it is singularly free of any such effect. *Your Children's Sleep* steps out very firmly with the right foot almost before the opening titles are off the screen, so arousing the sympathy and interest of the audience from the outset. It carries these to the end of its friendly, simple account of typical children and some of their problems of sleeping and not sleeping. Imaginatively made, with a warmly human commentary, this is another of Realist's excellent series of first-rate broadly educational films which deserves to be shown everywhere.

Space forbids the fuller review this film most certainly merits.

They Travel by Air. Public Relationship for British Overseas Airways in association with Film Centre. *Director*: Richard Massingham. *Camera*: J. Burgoyne-Johnson. *Editor*: John Waterhouse. *Script*: Tony Roberts. *Music*: W. Lambert Williamson.

Theme. A demonstration to the staff of BOAC of the importance of courtesy and control when dealing with air travel passengers.

Comment. To say simply that this is a staff demonstration film is perfectly true. It is, however, as a piece of film-making, very much more than that. It contains in great abundance that quality so rare in the documentary cinema, the quality of intelligent humour. Dr Richard Massingham, whose work is so well known to us, has done his job—the job of persuading BOAC stewards and attendants that the passenger is always right—sincerely and thoroughly. And he has also succeeded in making the lesson extremely funny. From casting to cutting it is a gem. He has picked out the awkward people so familiar, the truculent and the talkative, the nervous and the nagging, and has handled them so well that they scarcely know we are laughing at them. And if, as usual, he appears in the film himself, he surely has every right because he is the best actor of the lot.



Creatures of Comfort

(Continued foot of opposite page, col. 3)

THIS MODERN AGE

Land Short of People

No. 16

The British—Are They Artistic?

Theme. A discussion on the cultural life of the people of this country, and their reactions to drama and the arts.

Comment. This is surely a subject offering vast scope for the imaginative documentary producer, but, regretfully, we feel that he has ended up a little breathlessly, just after the boat has left. It is a very good attempt. The great strides made in all forms of culture during the war are dealt with well, and considerable effort has been taken to give us a fair cross-section of contemporary opera, ballet, and so on. Are we as a nation artistic? The question is scarcely answered. But there is an uptilted-nose atmosphere about the film which gives a slightly uncomfortable impression of snobbery. One can miss *Albert Herring* at Glyndebourne or *Checkmate* at Covent Garden without being a complete intellectual moron, while according to the film the alternative is the pornographic peepshow. This, of course, is absurd. But the middle course of the ordinary entertainment of the people is not there. That vast happy medium which provides the relaxation for the millions seems to fall into a valley not penetrated by the Modern Age cameras. While for some obscure reason the legitimate theatre as most of us know it is virtually ignored.

We hear some good sense from Norman Collins on the problems of the present-day book publisher and from Robert Donat on the future of the cinema. There is also an interview with C. B. Cochran, the substance of which has completely escaped us, but which left no particular impact on first hearing other than a disturbing inconsistency on the part of the recording which positively gave to C.B. a dual personality.

But there is a point of criticism about which we feel strongly. And this is common to the whole series of *This Modern Age*. The narration is undeniably bad. Not only has the commentator a voice lacking in all vigour and a delivery which is monotonous. But there is the impression that it has been recorded in a telephone box. This is a point of criticism which deserves the attention of the producers. The series is an important one. The subjects are usually absorbing and the messages behind them forthright and refreshing. If it is to be a British *March of Time*—and the comparison is meant to be a compliment—then those behind it must realize that the commentary is just as important as, and probably a whole lot more important than, the visuals. The narrator must mean what he is saying, and say it as though he means it. Just now he sounds as though he might be reading the prices in a seed catalogue.

No. 14

Jamaica Problem

THE development of self-government in the Colonial areas was speeded up considerably during the war years. In the case of Jamaica a new constitution was granted in 1944 on the English parliamentary pattern with universal adult suffrage, although local politicians make capital out of the fact that ultimate power still rests with the Governor. But the crucial problem remains an economic one. There is still little or no industry and the prosperity of the country is geared almost entirely to the uncertain prospects of one or two crops, principally bananas. Any failure in the harvest or the market means poverty for the island. Economic development is therefore the overriding concern of the Jamaicans.

This Modern Age has presented the picture honestly and well. One thing only it fails to make clear enough—the equivocal nature of the local leader, Bustamente, whose campaign for full sovereign rights has more in keeping with the antics of South American dictatorships. Power rather than the economic and social development of the island appears to be the principal motive of this demagogue who dominates the local scene.

Visually, the film is effective. The unsettling orgiastic undercurrents in Jamaican life are well illustrated by the jivings of a local priest and his servitors as they initiate a new member of the flock. The same uncontrolled emotional fervour goes of course into the frenzied support of Bustamente. The commentary, however, generally lacks punch. One could imagine *The March of Time* making more of the visual material by a better choice of words or more subtle inflection. Nevertheless the film is a valuable addition to the picture which This Modern Age is building up of the pattern of development within the Commonwealth and Colonial Empire.

No. 15

Land Short of People

Theme: Round a continent in twenty minutes.

Comment: To have told our ancestors that one day people sitting more or less comfortably in arm-chairs could have the experience of getting to know a continent in less than half an hour would have evoked a forthright 'Impossible!' This film does little to confound such an opinion, for in covering so much ground already familiar to many people it misses the chance of probing more deeply into Australia's problems and opportunities. A young and vital country like Australia deserves a less superficial survey than this.

And why must the commentator shout?

They Travel by Air (*contd.*)

This film emphasizes what has for some time been something of a puzzle. Dicky Massingham can put ordinary people doing ordinary things in front of the camera so that they are really amusing and entertaining as ordinary people can be. How is it that he has not been snatched up by the feature boys? Good fun is so missing in British feature films that one would think there would be room there for someone whose wit and sense of cinema are obviously so beautifully balanced. Still, why should we grumble? But Massingham has been long enough at the staff training film game, with its limited opportunities and relatively minor exhibition. It is high time he took a header into a much more ambitious field.

Films and the National Coal Board

by H. K. Lewenhak

WHEN THE National Coal Board was set up it could not go ahead and create a brand new industry of its own; it had to work with and on the materials it had taken over. The same is true about the National Coal Board's film side. It, too, inherited a number of ready-made films and an incomplete film programme, together with a number of established connections. So, in formulating its film policy, the Public Relations Branch of the Board at no time had the ideal and idyllic opportunity of sitting down before a clean plate. In formulating its own film programme, it had to adapt and to make do.

From the past, it took over a number of good popular instructional films which had been made under private enterprise and which, apart from being somewhat out of date from the technological point of view, did give the layman some idea of how a mine worked. We continued with these films and they were widely shown by Recruitment Officers, also forming the main items on the programme of our Mobile Cinema Vans. Valuable experience with these daylight vans as recruiting media had been gained while operating under the Ministry of Fuel and Power, and on this basis the campaign with them was continued and expanded. From the Ministry of Fuel and Power the Board also inherited a number of straightforward training films and one or two uncompleted documentaries.

For the first nine months of their official existence, the Board also continued to operate under the Ministry of Fuel and Power's vote with the Central Office of Information, who made films for the NCB cost free, as an Allied Service. It was, however, open to the Board to commission any other films outside their arrangements with the COI, provided they bore the cost themselves. The Ministry vote ended in September, after which time the Board, like any other industrial sponsor, had to pay for all the films they commissioned. Limiting this, however, it was decided that, as recruiting to the mines is a question of national policy, all direct recruiting films should be made for the Board by the Ministry of Labour through the Central Office of Information.

Out of this tangle of half-finished films, previous commitments, etc., an attempt was and is being made to hammer out a comprehensive film policy.

Before any film is commissioned, we take great pains to get quite clear to whom exactly the film is to speak and exactly what we want it to say. This may not be a startling innovation, but has often been omitted in the past.

The most important of all is the question of distribution. What sort of distribution is desired is determined, to some extent, by the audience we are aiming at—tempered by the kind of distribution we can actually hope to get. A great deal of thought and time is spent on this question of distribution, because we wish to avoid the trap of making films and then finding, as has too often happened, that there is no ready means of getting them shown. Our film policy had a very definite eye to the market. We also found that working backwards, as it were, from audience and distribution, gave us a much clearer idea of exactly what kind of film we wanted.

Our films have to fulfil a number of distinct and separate tasks: there are the films which are intended to inform the general public about mining, its problems and the progress being made to overcome them. Secondly, there are the films intended primarily to recruit men to the industry, and thirdly, the training and industrial morale films for within the industry itself.

These are three distinct functions, but films and film audiences cannot be divided into watertight compartments. For example, the miner, as a member of the community, obviously sees the film in which you are informing the lay public about the industry, and the way he features in such a film has an obvious effect on his morale. Similarly, films that are intended to be purely informative also have a recruiting 'bye-products', and so on. So that, while one's principal aims in films remain clear cut and separate, one has also got to see that the separate sectors are kept in line.

For internal consumption, in addition to the training films, the Coal Board have started an industrial newsreel for which theatrical distribution has been achieved in cinemas in mining areas. The aim of the reel is to keep the miner informed of developments in his own industry and to widen his sense of community from that of his own particular locality to the whole community. We have also tried, with some success, to interest Colliery Consultative Committees—the present descendants of the wartime Pit Production Committees—in our films, with the result that they are being shown in Miners' Welfare Halls, etc.

We have made mistakes. The miner is a highly discriminating filmgoer, and we have received copies of Colliery Committees' Minutes, 'deploring the poor technical standard' of one or other of our earlier efforts. Such discrimination is, perhaps, one of the most encouraging features of the work. It means that the film producer working for such an audience need not fear that his finer nuances are being wasted on an insensitive audience.

Films are expensive. The Coal Board is not a Government Department, with access to public funds, but a trading public corporation. The cost of all its films must be charged against revenue. It is against this rigorous financial background that the films are proving, and must increasingly prove, their effective worth to the industry.

A Musician's Approach to the Documentary Film

by William Alwyn

A FUNDAMENTAL principle of artistic creation is that the artist should work within the limits of his medium. His expression is conditioned by his tools. The small canvas demands the miniaturist's approach—the Sistine Chapel, the grand manner. These limits may not only be defined by purely artistic requirements but by the more urgent and practical limitations of purse, the availability of suitable canvas and a possible world shortage in camel-hair. It is imperative in the musician's approach to the film that he should have a clear realization of the scope of his medium—that he should cut his coat according to his cloth and his clothing coupons.

In the early days of Documentary the composer had a very clear idea of the conditions of his work; conditions imposed by a limited budget, the experimental nature and size of the recording theatre, and the imperfections of recording gear and reproduction. The budget for music was usually in the nature of pocket-money and this naturally conditioned the size of orchestra; some instruments did not record well, and this conditioned the type of orchestra. But most important of all, the composer, together with the producer and director, realized that he was pioneering in the use of the sound track, that the field for experiment seemed boundless and he had a firm appreciation of the basic fact that the sound track should be a unification of commentary, sound effects and music. To mention but two of the early documentaries, *Song of Ceylon* (music by Walter Leigh) and *Night Mail* (music by Benjamin Britten), is to realize that in both cases composer and director were working with a complete understanding of the restrictions of their medium; working within its limits, and working with the enthusiasm of pioneers with fresh fields to plough. These films are over ten years old, yet by virtue of the intelligence of the technical approach they are vital and contemporary today, whereas the feature film of the period is too often a museum piece.

Any art that depends on mechanism for its expression is bound to progress towards mechanical perfection (e.g. the art of flying, from the hazardous contraptions of the Wright brothers to the jet-propelled super-sonic plane of today). Ten years in the art of film music has led us from castles in the air to *Cameron Castle* at Beaconsfield, and by slow stages to Stage I at Denham. Better recording theatres lead to better reproduction; better music recording leads to bigger and better orchestras. One by one the mechanical limitations have been

(*Continued page* 47)

Ross McLean

a Close-Up

by

Alan Field

THE GENTLEMAN whose classic features distinguish this page is Mr Ross McLean, Film Commissioner of the National Film Board of Canada and spiritual leader of the largest single documentary film, graphics and visual aids agency in the known world. Today the National Film Board which Mr McLean heads has 600 employees, sends its films and graphics materials to more than 35 countries, operates its own national non-theatrical circuits and has produced in its seven years of existence more than 2,700 films.

About this job of running a two and a half million dollar enterprise, Ross McLean has the following to say: 'Films of every kind whether entertainment, educational or documentary have a terrific impact upon people. It is our responsibility jointly with film makers everywhere to see that some assuagement of the savagery of modern life is made possible by people who realize the full potential of film.'

The present healthy state of the Film Board, its wide range of activity and its personnel bear lasting witness to the influence and initiative of John Grierson who was Ross McLean's predecessor as Canadian Film Commissioner. Comparison between the first and second Film Commissioners is invidious. A more profitable speculation could be made upon the qualities required to head the National Film Board.

Obviously the Film Commissioner must be capably an administrator. He must know his nation, his people and their history; he must understand the social and economic topography of his country. He must possess, above all, a political 'nous' in addition to that discursive reason which the Platonists called 'logos'. With understanding and knowledge must go sympathy and respect for creative undertakings in the public good. In these capacities Ross McLean is abundantly gifted and in the balance sheet it can be fairly said that there was on the native horizon no other person singularly fitted for the job.

If Britain is the spawning ground for the documentary idea, Ross McLean is the link in the chain which anchored that idea in Canada. It was Ross McLean who first proposed that John Grierson be invited to Canada to survey the Canadian position in the light of the British documentary development. The meeting between Grierson and McLean took place in December 1935 when the GPO was recovering from the birthpangs of *Night Mail*. Basil Wright, Cavalcanti and Evelyn Spice were present for that occasion. No tablet as yet marks the historic site of that meeting but one might justifiably be erected.

At that time a Government film establishment did exist in Canada—the Motion Picture Bureau—which began its work in 1924, flourished during the silent days of film and fell upon evil times in the early 'thirties. The emergence of a full-accoutred British documentary found the Motion Picture Bureau struggling with subtitles dealing with moose and goose. Ross McLean's proposal led Grierson to Canada and the evolution of the National Film Act of 1939 with the Scottish film master installed as the first Commissioner.

Four hundred crises and two thousand films later, Grierson resigned in October 1945. Ross McLean had meantime become successively Assistant Film Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner by 1943, Acting Commissioner at Grierson's resignation and finally, in January 1947, was appointed to head NFB. It is interesting to note that the Order-In-Council authorizing the appointment was sent with the personal congratulations and best wishes of the Prime Minister of Canada.

Background to this drama begins in Ethelbert, Manitoba, where Ross McLean was born 42 years ago. Recently an Ottawa journalist pleading for more adequate rail facilities for the region described Ethelbert as 'the birthplace of many famous Canadians—including Ross McLean, the Film Commissioner'. Despite the alleged lack of transportation, Mr McLean cut a swathe through schools of the prairie lands like a 16 ft. reaper-thresher.

Graduating from the University of Manitoba with BA in modern history, at the tender age of 21 he was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and journeyed to Balliol for a sojourn amongst the Oxonians. Documentary seeds were implanted when he became the first holder of the Beit senior research scholarship and wrote a thesis on the social consequences of emancipation in Trinidad and British Guiana. Mr McLean's thesis found certain flaws in that emancipation.

After receiving his BLitt at Oxford there followed a session of special work for the Unemployment Relief Commission of Illinois. In 1932 he was national secretary of the Association of Canadian Clubs, the organization which has played an important part in the growth of an informed national expression. At the time of meeting Grierson, Mr McLean was stationed in Britain as secretary to the Rt Hon Vincent Massey, former High Commissioner for Canada to the United Kingdom.

With the inception of the National Film Board, Ross McLean was one of its three originals—the others being Grierson and Janet Scellen. Stuart Legg was then liaison at the old Motion Picture Bureau. From the first McLean's skill in negotiation, his wide knowledge of government and the personalities of government were invaluable in getting NFB established and working. In those early days after 1939 he both directed and produced films.

The healthy, active and widening scope of NFB's work is the best testimonial of Ross McLean's stewardship. He has welded its manifold activities into a more co-operative whole; he has raised standards of production in film and graphics; he has shown enterprise and insight in initiating new programmes. To the strong tree that Grierson planted he has added his own mature and civilizing influence.

Of the future of the National Film Board he says: 'NFB has a special function as a pilot plant in terms of ideas and the adaptation of ideas and somehow or other those ideas must help to add to the common understanding and the enlargement of compassion among people.'

Why Scientific Film Societies?

by

James W. Oswald

THE QUESTION 'What is a scientific film?' has begun to rank with the famous 'What is Truth?' and attempts at definition of either are equally elusive. Here, a new question is offered for answer—'Why scientific film societies?' Why has interest in scientific and documentary films increased so rapidly during the past ten years?

In 1938, the first scientific film society—the London SFS—was formed by enthusiastic members of the Association of Scientific Workers. 1948, ten years later, is a suitable point at which to pause and take stock. Arising directly from this small beginning came the Scientific Film Association which has gained a world-wide prestige and reputation making it the recognized authority on all aspects of the use of scientific films. The past decade has been one of great progress but let no one, however lofty his aspirations for the future, ever forget that the scientific film societies were responsible for starting the movement.

In this same ten years, a number of new societies have been formed and 43 are now affiliated to the Scientific Film Association. From a total membership of 260 in 1938, the film society audience has grown to approximately 10,000 in 1948. This figure takes no account of the occasional shows put on by scientific and other bodies in connection with their general activities. It is of interest to see what sort of composition the scientific film society audience has and speculate on the reasons for their presence. Some societies, such as those formed in Government departments, have a restricted membership but many are open to anyone. The London SFS is such a society and in 1945-46 carried out an analysis of the professions of its members. The professions were classified under four main headings—1. *Scientific* (chemists, physicists, engineers, etc.); 2. *Technical* (film-workers, laboratory assistants, etc.); 3. *Education* (teachers and students); and 4. *Non-scientific* (clerks, typists, accountants, etc.). This classification may have been somewhat arbitrary but the results of analysis of some 800 members' professions gave the following results:

Scientific	40 per cent
Technical	15 per cent
Education	20 per cent
Non-scientific	25 per cent

It is probable that the scientific and technical sections do not expect to learn a great deal that is new in their own subjects, but want to know what the other fellow is thinking and doing. The chemist wants to find out how the engineer is tackling his particular problems, the engineer is interested in the activities of the physicist. The scientific film society provides a valuable centre for keeping scientists in touch with the many and varied aspects of subjects with which they are not in daily contact. Films are being used to a greater extent than ever before for educational purposes and if only for this reason, those concerned with teaching join scientific film societies to see what is available and form some idea of how the films may be used. It is more difficult to find reasons for the presence of the quarter of the audience that has been given the label 'non-scientific'. Is it that there are 'mute, inglorious' Darwins and Rutherfords in the world of commerce? Is it that they cannot find the films they want in the local cinemas? The most probable reason is satisfaction of curiosity in wanting to know 'what makes the wheels go round'.

The scientific film society audience must not be confused with that to be found in the commercial cinema in that trance-like state engendered by the vapourings of Hollywood. Any society secretary will confirm that his members are wide awake and very critical of the films put before them. Probably the most common criticism is that the films are not 'scientific' enough. Although shots of cranes silhouetted against a background of steam may be aesthetically satisfying, they do not add to our knowledge of the cranes. It is treatments such as this that form the basis of such criticism. When one society showed *Atomic Physics* recently, there was such a flood of applications that the programme had to be repeated—an event unprecedented in the history of the society. Needless to say, there were no criticisms of this film being 'unscientific'.

Many societies have carried out audience reaction experiments to find out what their members think of certain films. The results, although of interest, have a somewhat academic flavour in that they apply to the finished product only. It seems strange that no documentary producer has yet made use of this ready-made audience as a body of opinion on a film he has in the making. It would be a worthwhile experiment to take a scientific film society audience into his confidence from the start, explain what he is setting out to do and the lines on which he proposes to work. Let them see the bits and pieces of the film as it is being made and ask for criticism. This may seem a bold and new procedure but much valuable information might be obtained and here might be found a way to that freshness of treatment lacking in so many documentaries of today.

COMPETITIONS

READERS apparently did not feel inspired to write to their cinema managers in COMPETITION No. 2. No entries were received. COMPETITION No. 4 will be a CLERIHEW on anything concerning the documentary film world. Entries before May 1st please.

Trident Films Ltd.

is pleased to introduce Douglas Jackson, farmer and educationist, who has joined the firm as instructional adviser.

'Methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face'

Rosanne Brownrigg — H. Annesley Brownrigg

Marjorie Greenwood — Douglas Jackson

77 Dean Street, W.1 Gerrard 1458/9

A Musician's Approach to the Documentary Film

(*Continued from page* 44)

sloughed and the musician now finds it possible to compose as for the concert hall with the knowledge that what he writes will be reproduced with mechanical fidelity. The danger is that, through this very perfection of music recording, the composer may be led into a state of self-sufficiency, and music for film thought of as a thing-in-itself, divorced from the unified sound track. (I don't say this is true, I am merely pointing to a danger signal.)

Again it becomes imperative that the composer for the documentary film should not lose sight of the limitations of his medium—and there are still limitations, not the least of which is the important problem of 16 mm reproduction.

If a documentary is made for non-theatrical release (and 16 mm reproduction), then it is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that certain types of music do not reproduce well on sub-standard film and, therefore, 16 mm imposes special limitations on the composer. What these limitations are, each composer must assess for himself. My own feelings are that sub-standard reproduction demands emphasis on melodic line (as opposed to 'colour' and 'effect' music), clarity and simplicity of treatment, and that this clarity is best achieved by a strict limitation of the size, and a nicer choice of the components of the orchestra. A few instruments will reproduce better than a large body—though, of course, the type and scope of the film itself poses its own problem. (The strict artistic functions of the use of music in any particular film demand primary consideration.) If the film requires bigness of treatment then by all means use a larger orchestra, but the scoring should be broad and clear—in line rather than in colour.

With the 16 mm film we are still in the experimental stage and personally I am all for experiment! The art of film music is a young art and still cries out for the spirit of adventure; 'Music, heavenly maid' is still a teen-ager. To sum up, let us avoid becoming stereotyped in our approach to film music: let us not forget that music is only a part of the sound track which ideally should be a fusion of the spoken or sung word, natural sound and sound effects —a vitally important part, but still a part; and let us realize, not only the limitations imposed by the film on music, but its still infinite and unexplored possibilities.

Postscript:

I cannot leave this question of the unification of the sound track without making these points.

1. Music should not be left to the last possible moment and added as an after-thought.
2. The pursuit of the ideal sound track calls for much closer co-operation between the composer and the sound effects department.
3. Little can be achieved without careful planning. (A complex score such as that composed for Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* was made possible because it was considered and discussed *before* the film went into production. The same equally applies to such films as Rotha's *World of Plenty* or *The World is Rich* (music by Clifton Parker). The sound track for these films was the result of careful and patient planning in which all concerned, not least the composer, worked as a team from the earliest stages of scripting to the final stages of the dubbing session.)

Sixpence on the Rates?

(*Continued from page* 41)

education and social life of the borough. This Council, being a representative body working in conjunction with the Libraries Committee, was able to carry out activities for which the Borough Council then had no powers.

4. Films are used in the various series of talks which have been held; at exhibitions, etc, and screen trailers for advertising purposes.

What St Pancras intends to do in the future.

1. The Borough Council have accepted the powers under the LCC General Powers Act and are considering the question of themselves providing 'concerts and entertainments' as defined under the Act.
2. The Arts and Civic Council will act in an advisory capacity, but will extend its activities in spheres which require closer contact with organizations in the borough. These include Community Clubs, a Music Group, Repertory Film Club, and the like.

What are general reactions and feeling towards Act?

A great step forward and one which was envisaged by the Borough Council when sponsoring the Arts and Civic Council. The Council can now perform those duties which, previously, it had no power to do.

CORRESPONDENCE

From Australia:

SIR: In your 'Notes of the Month', January, 1948, you say: 'Let's have your views and criticisms. . . .'

I would very much like to see *DFN* printed in large type. The articles, news, film reviews, etc., are all most interesting, but to those of us in the Roaring 'Forties two or three pages is about all that can be managed at a sitting. Larger type, of course, means less printed matter; but it also means less eye-strain. We have all seen the film *Your Children's Eyes*; but what about some consideration for 'Your Readers' Eyes'.

Now that that growl is off my chest, here are some items which may be of interest:

The Film Society movement is fairly strong in NSW. There are about eight city groups and

(*Continued on next page*)

INTERNATIONAL REALIST

NEARING COMPLETION

GUN DOGS

COMMENTARY BY

BERNARD MILES

BASIL WRIGHT JOHN TAYLOR E. P. MOYNA

CORRESPONDENCE—*contd.*

several in country towns. A federation of NSW societies has been formed, with a view to getting more documentary and educational films into the country. There are dozens of excellent films on 16 mm stock available to UK audiences which are not in our libraries.

At the moment there seem to be as many 16 mm projectors in Sydney as there are films. In the Department of Education the ratio is 2½ films per projector, and with more schools putting in machines, the position is getting worse. A heavy blow to the 16 mm users is the closing of the Canadian Film Board library of 200 films. This is being done as an economy measure by the Canadian Government. What will happen to the films is the burning question? Probably they will go the same way as the US films when that library was closed last year; they went to the National Film Library at Canberra and are rarely seen now. Getting films out of the Canberra library is, to put it mildly, not easy. The only films available now in Sydney are the Documentary Film Council, UK local tourist offices and sponsored films from oil companies, etc. The position for the enthusiast is pretty grim.

To give an idea of the type of film society we have in Sydney, here are a few details of the Independent Film Group, to which I belong: membership 300, annual subscription 10*s*. Two screenings per month, usual attendance 150-180. Using two similar Australian-built Harmour and Heath projectors; members at least have no complaints on the technical quality of the screenings. All films are previewed by a programme committee—a highly necessary procedure.

Yours faithfully,

J. CLARKE

Visual Units

SIR: In the article 'Open Letter from a Schoolteacher' (your January issue) we noted the following criticisms of *Houses in History*, one of the films shown at the Conference of Visual Units in Manchester.

'Someone in the discussion said that it wasn't a subject which was really suitable for a film and I must say I didn't like it very much—I wouldn't use it because I think my children would find it hard to follow and a bit dull.'

As the film unit responsible for making *Houses in History* we feel we should like to reply to these observations.

1. No clear educational briefing was forthcoming from either the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Information at the time of commissioning, January 1st, 1945.
2. The film was designed as part of a visual unit without its producers having any working knowledge of, or say in, the remainder of that unit.
3. Alhough the subject expert, appointed by the Ministry of Education, and the producer and director agreed on the purpose and general scope of the film, they seemed always to be at variance with the Ministry of Information (and later the Central Office of Information).
4. The final commentary of the film was written by COI after a commentary had been carefully prepared by the film's makers, the subject expert and a practising teacher.

   The COI consistently refused to call in the Ministry of Education until the final rough-cut stage with a completed commentary. Technically the film suffered from the changes that had to be made at that stage to meet the needs of the Ministry of Education. Obviously they should have been in from the start so that the original form of the film, once agreed, could be adhered to.
5. The Associate Producer was not appointed to the film until after it had been started.
6. Up to the date of this letter, the makers of the film have ~~been given~~ no opportunity of seeing (let alone commenting on) the complete visual unit, of which the film was only one part.
7. All during production, the COI and the Ministry of Education stressed the experimental nature of the project. We agree. An experiment of how *not* to commission an educational film or a visual unit.

It is particularly discouraging for units interested in such experimental work to find that the films we work so hard to produce in such difficult circumstances are so useless to the people who are eventually expected to use them.

Yours, etc.,

HANS M. NEITER

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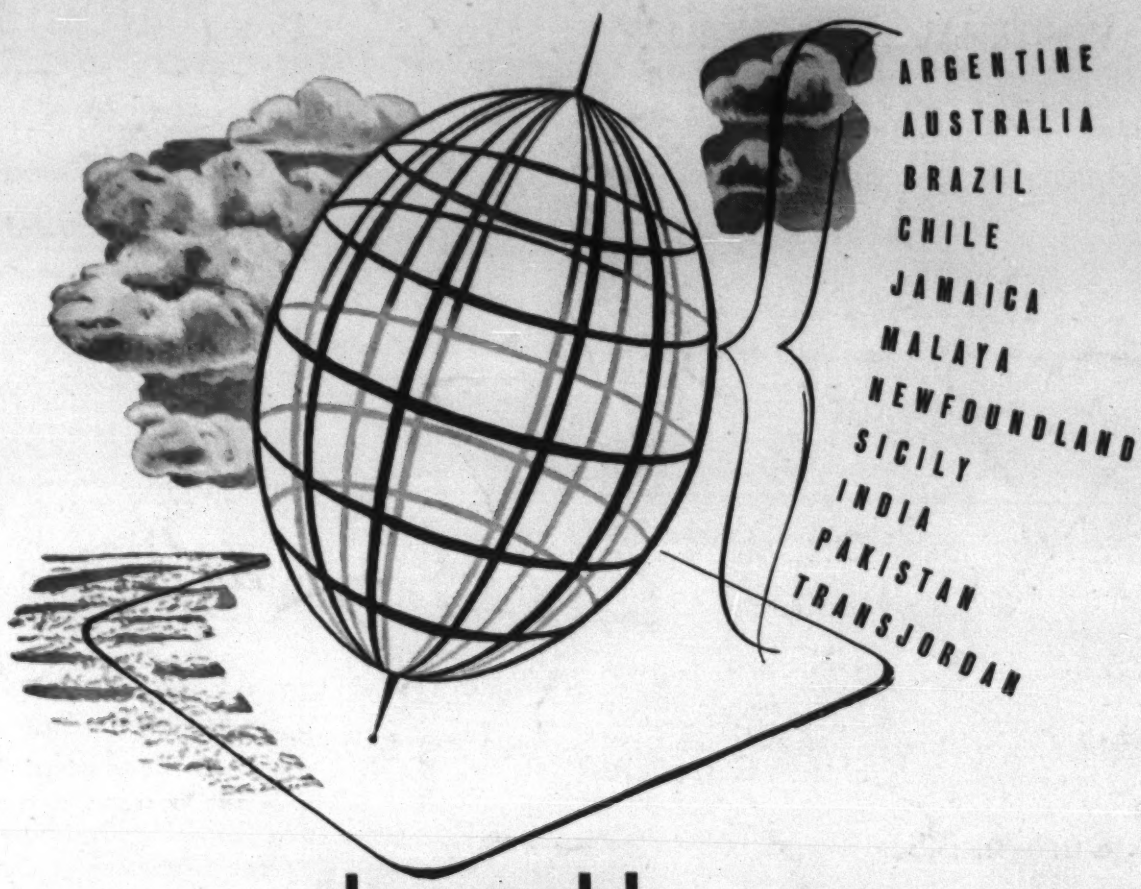

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